



New York State
Department of Health
Bureau of Emergency Medical Services

POLICY STATEMENT

Supersedes /Updates: 87-10 Reissued

No. 98-13

Date 10/15/98

Re:

Passenger Restraint
Devices in
Emergency Response
Vehicles

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BACKGROUND

New York State Vehicle & Traffic law requires drivers and all front seat passengers in motor vehicles to be restrained in safety seats or by safety belts. An exemption in the law was provided for drivers and passengers who have a physically disabling condition which would prevent the use of these safety devices. For the purpose of the law, the term "motor vehicle" specifically excludes those vehicles which are "authorized emergency vehicles" and includes ambulances.

There is overwhelming evidence and data to support the use of seat belts. Many federal and other studies have proven that seat belt use has a direct and immediate impact on reducing highway fatalities and injuries. Persons wearing seat belts are more likely to remain in control of their vehicle and are less likely to be ejected or hurled to other parts of the vehicle. A restrained driver is three times less likely to be killed or seriously injured. Similar statistics apply to passengers as well. Thus, the use of seat belts protect the driver, passengers in the ambulance as well as other motorists, pedestrians and our patient.

PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this policy to assist EMS services in reviewing or developing policies and practices that insure the appropriate use of seat belts by crew members, passengers and patients.

RECOMMENDATIONS

New York State Emergency Medical Services strongly recommends that all ambulance services develop service specific policies for their personnel that include at least the following:

- All operators and front seat passengers of ambulance service vehicles must use seat belts when the vehicle is in motion.

- All patients not on a patient carrying device and any passengers in the patient compartment of any ambulance must use seat belts at all times when the vehicle is in motion.
- All EMS personnel in the patient compartment must use seat belts when they are not attending to a patient and the vehicle is in motion.
- All patients on the stretcher must be secured at all times when the vehicle is in motion or the stretcher is being carried or moved.
- Any child transported to the hospital should be in the child's own protective restraining device when available. He/she should be placed in the device and belted to an ambulance seat. If the child actually is the patient, he/she should be appropriately secured onto the stretcher.
- All operators & passengers in any non-ambulance response vehicle (EASV, ALSFR, etc.) must use seat belts at all times when the vehicle is in motion.

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